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4-9-2007

# Hilltopics: Volume 3, Issue 21

Hilltopics Staff

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## Recommended Citation

Hilltopics Staff, "Hilltopics: Volume 3, Issue 21" (2007). *Hilltopics*. 67.  
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# HILLTOPICS

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volume three, issue twenty one  
week of april 9, 2007

## Hooking up: one student's attempt to define and understand a social enigma facing SMU students

by Ashlee Rivalto

You hear the term nearly everyday while watching MTV's "Laguna Beach" or just sitting at Hughes Trigg picking up on conversations around you. To some the term "hooking up" means meeting someone for coffee, to others the term means being sexually involved with someone.

Oddly enough, this frequently used term remains open to interpretation, even though one's reputation depends heavily on its meaning. How did the term come about, what does it mean, and why is it an accepted form of guy/girl relations?

A recent survey of SMU students revealed that students considered hooking up to mean anything sexual ranging from kissing to sex. Others described the term as anything sexual except for sex. Only a select few interpreted the term as kissing. Even though some similarities emerged, survey answers seemed to differ between sexes.

Every male included sex in their description of hooking up, except for a third year markets and cultures major, who described it as "...getting jiggy with it," which can also be left to interpretation. On the other hand, a whopping 70 percent of females described the term as anything but sex. The two groups were aware of the confusion between the sexes, as the majority answered yes when asked if they thought the opposite sex had a different way of looking at hookups.

"Boys are hoping that a hookup will lead to sex, whether it happens the first time they hookup or the second time. Either way they just have a different way of looking at things like that than girls do," explains one 3rd year finance major.

Although students disagree on the important technicalities of the term, both sexes agree that "hooking up" usually takes place without commitment or even full knowledge of the other person's name, not to mention other things such as dreams, ideas, personality—which, in the past, would have been learned about the other person on a first date.

Dating is an outdated practice rarely even mentioned in the social scenes of young adults today. Why? "They are awkward," says Erin Dillard, a sophomore journalism major from Atlanta. "No one wants to sit alone with someone they do not know and try to make up conversation. Social and group settings are much more comfortable."

Most would agree that first dates are usually very stressful and involve many awkward conversations as well as silences with a person that you hardly know. If talking to a stranger is awkward, how does one become sexually involved with someone whom they have recently just met? Easy—alcohol.

Alcohol is a key factor when hooking up with someone, according to 60% of the surveyed students.

"Getting tanked is the way you go about 'hooking up' with someone," a second year marketing major explains. "You usually see someone at a bar, buy them a couple drinks and you end up going back to their house with them...it doesn't have to involve sex but it does have to involve alcohol."

Alcohol lowers inhibitions and enables people to feel more comfortable with people they hardly know. "Without alcohol, 'hooking up' would not be as frequent," says Cathryn Homer, a sophomore English and Marketing major. "It makes the whole thing less awkward if you have not taken time to get to know a person."

Which brings up the question, why do people not want to take time to get to know each other? Sure dating is awkward, but is that the reason so many young adults "get tanked" and spend the night with a complete stranger? There really is no answer why so many young people pick a quick, no-frills hookup over a dating relationship.

In the April 2007 addition of *Marie Claire*, *Washington Post* reporter, Laura Sessions Stepp, was interviewed about her new book "Unhooked: How Young Women Pursue Sex, Delay Love and Lose at Both." Stepp explains the new "hookup cul-

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**Last Chance:** *Hilltopics* is sponsoring an essay contest, and we're offering over \$1,000 in prizes. More info on page 2.

We welcome submissions from all members of the SMU community. Letters to the editor should be up to 300 words in response to a previously published article. Contributions should be articles of up to 300-600 words on any topic or in response to another article. Please email your submission to [hilltopics@hotmail.com](mailto:hilltopics@hotmail.com) by Wednesday at 7:00 PM to be included in the following week's publication. Special deadlines will be observed for breaking campus events. The opinions expressed in *Hilltopics* are those of the authors solely and do not reflect the beliefs of *Hilltopics* or any other entity. As such, *Hilltopics* does not publish anonymous articles.

## Infinitive splitting: perfectly acceptable practice (Despite what others may have you believe)

by Monica Chavez

Even if Hamlet would have been okay with it, as linguist Stephen Pinker once noted, poor Captain Kirk would have had “to go boldly where no man ha[d] gone before” had he abided by the ridiculous notion that we should not split infinitives in English. When there are far more egregious grammatical errors being committed left and right in English prose, why should we latch on to something editors like myself regularly fail to register as errors anyway?

The reason people don’t notice split infinitives as mistakes is that they are, in fact, perfectly natural English constructions. Experts’ opinions differ about how the rule got into “correct” English grammar in the first place, but some ascribe its appearance to the influence Latin had on scholars a few centuries back. Since in Latin an infinitive is a single word, by its own nature it simply cannot be split. Applying that same rule to English is erroneous because in English infinitives are composed of two words, making it sensible to separate them where necessary.

The same can be said about prepositions. It is not grammatically correct to end a sentence or clause in a preposition in Latin, so grammarians applied that notion to English, even though in English it’s a natural phenomenon, as in any Germanic language. To show you just how natural it is, consider this: Languages derived from Latin, such as Spanish and French, also have a prohibition against ending clauses in prepositions, such that native speakers would never com-

mit such an error. However, those Spanish speakers who have grown up in a bilingual environment with English as the dominant language sometimes show its inescapable influence by ending their Spanish sentences in prepositions.

Indeed, for all the emphasis English grade school teachers put on silly “mistakes” like the split infinitive, American students today seem to have miserable abilities in written prose. When I edit my friends’ papers or peruse the articles of either the *DC* or our own *Hilltopics*, what I notice more often is the lack of style, smooth transitions, and an overall logical structure to the piece being written. Even English and journalism majors don’t seem to know how to construct a pulled-together argument that transitions smoothly from topic to topic and sentence to sentence, but they’ll jump all over a single misplaced modifier.

Certainly there are grammatical prescriptions worth abiding by, without which writing can become a terrible confusing mess (I’m thinking here of things like run-on sentences and improperly employed conjunctions). But when you look at the awkward constructions we wind up with while trying to avoid split infinitives and clauses ending in prepositions, well, as Winston Churchill so aptly put it, “This is the sort of English up with which I will not put!”

Monica is a junior political science and foreign languages and literatures major

## Understanding Hook Ups: continued from page 1

ture” as “the most confusing sexual landscape any generation has faced.” Stepp, who has spent the last year following eight 20 something women has come to the conclusion that hooking up has no definite rules or definition. “They are just making it up as they go along,” she says.

Stepp also argues that hooking up and random sexual encounters are not only meaningless but are also mentally damaging, especially in women. She argues that a woman’s biology—the release of oxytocin during sexual relations—causes them to want more than just a one-night hookup. As she puts it, “evolution tells them to cuddle and stay in bed, and look forward for tomorrow. When they get up and walk out, they feel depressed and don’t know why.” Stepp explains how alcohol plays a roll in hooking up by suppressing emotions.

“One reason we’re seeing alcohol consumption rates go up in women is that they are taking part in these sexual encounters, believing they should do so and feel strong about it...” says Stepp. She believes that the reason women drink is so that they can suppress their emotions in order to have an emotion-free hook up, something that she describes as “a cheap thrill.”

Is hooking up a cheap thrill? One second year CCPA major says yes, “Of course it’s a cheap thrill, people know it is not going to go anywhere, they just do it for fun. If a girl really liked a boy she would not hook up with him, instead she would wait and get to know him better.” If hookups are for fun then what are long lasting relationships for? Are there still young adults out there that want to date and develop

meaningful relationships, maybe even one day get married?

Almost every female that was asked that question said that they would like to have a meaningful relationship. Some wanted them now, others wanted them later on in life, and all wanted to someday get married. If that is the case then at what point are college age kids going to stop hooking up and start getting to know one another mentally rather than physically?

“Girls really do want a meaningful relationship. But when they pursue a dating route rather than a hookup route they are, many times, automatically looked upon as being clingy and wanting to get too serious too fast,” one student explains. “I think that it is about time for our generation to start dating again, instead of relying on sexual gratification to fill our yearnings of closeness with one another. Hooking up can only take you so far...”

Ashlee Rivalto is a sophomore corporate communications and public affairs major

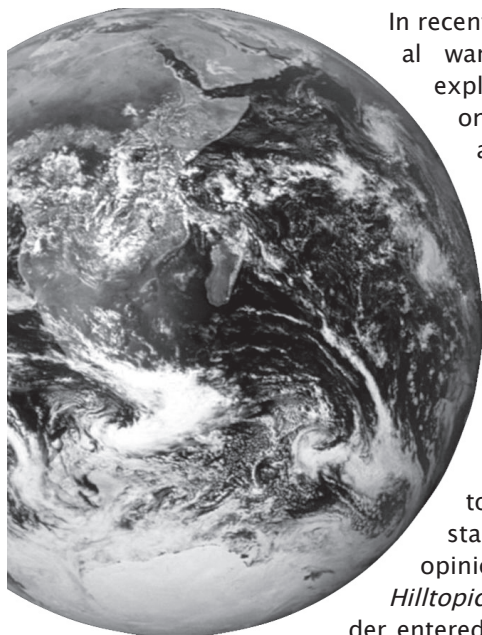
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*Hilltopics* is published each Monday. It is sponsored by the University Honors Program and the Residence Hall Association.

## Revolutions in collegiate competition: universities fight against *U.S. News & World Report*

by Mitchell London



In recent months, the global warming debate has exploded like a bomb on the North Korean coastline. Both *Time* and *Newsweek* magazines featured global warming reports on their covers last week. With the increased attention to the issue, everyone – from scientists to senators to pop-stars – has cast an opinion. In last week's *Hilltopics*, SMU's Kyle Snyder entered the debate. Like a

bull trapped in a red room, Snyder's article raged about global warming from beginning to end.

Unlike most critics, however, Snyder's problem with global warming has nothing to do with the science behind the political movement. By his own admission, he is not a "global warming denier," and makes a personal effort to reduce emissions for the sake of the environment. He does not seem to think the issue is a pressing problem either – at least not for Minneapolis. In all, Snyder seems radically ambivalent to global warming as an environmental problem. So what about global warming has Snyder's basketball shorts in a wad? Al Gore.

His argument, as I understand it, is that Al Gore and his crack team of sandal-wearing, tree-hugging pro-French pinko environmentalists have taken the issue, inflated it, and used it as a banner for personal political gain. Gore's efforts to save the environment are undercut, Snyder argues, by the fact that the man lives in a huge, energy guzzling, mansion. His article is not about the global warming problem – it is about Al Gore and the proponents of global warming... and how they are jackasses.

As a global warming supporter, I should be offended with what Snyder has to say about Gore. I am not. I am as dubious as Ann Coulter about Gore's "carbon credits," and I think that Snyder is correct to call attention to it. Snyder fails, I believe, to adequately distinguish between Gore's message and his personal life. In criticizing Gore, Snyder makes some questionable claims about the global warming agenda.


First, and most importantly, Snyder claims that Gore has made global warming a "political agenda." I am not sure what this means. When Snyder says that Gore has a "political agenda," I think that he means that Gore is leveraging his political power amongst politicians and the media broaden and empower the global warming movement. I do not see a

problem with that. Every law passed by Congress and signed by the President has a political agenda. All of the most important laws in the past century had political agendas, and have required people like Al Gore to bring the issues to nationwide social scrutiny. Snyder should not fault Gore for being an advocate. That is what politicians do.

Second, Snyder portrays Gore as a "communist" who wants to shut down industry and obstruct personal liberties in the name of global warming. Frankly, that is false. Snyder never addresses Gore's specific policies. They do not pose massive challenges to American industry or American freedoms. Like all government policies, Gore's proposals require increased spending and governmental regulation. The current government has increased spending more than any other since the New Deal. Increasing taxes to bolster current environmental programs and offset carbon emissions is a necessary sacrifice to creating a sustainable environment. Setting higher standards for carbon-emitting industrial plants (not shutting them down) is, given the science, the socially responsible thing to do. Unless I missed a very special radio address, Gore has not proposed anything which will change the name of this newspaper to Sovietotopics.

As a person who follows the news with a grain of salt, I appreciated Snyder's charge to question what Gore has to say about global warming. It is important to separate Gore the person from Gore's proposals. Every day, more scientists and politicians acknowledge the danger of global warming and the need to immediately enact policies to fix it. All of these policies will undoubtedly involve a degree of sacrifice. Even if Gore punched manatees for fun, it would not dilute the nature of the global warming problem or the need to fix it.

Mitchell London is a senior political science major



**First Annual Campus Essay Contest**

**Win \$750 for 750 words!**

This spring, *Hilltopics* is sponsoring its first annual essay campus essay contest, and you're invited to participate for your chance at \$1,000 in prizes. Turn your 600 to 750 word essay in before 5:00 on April 13 at Clements Hall room 108.

**Prompt:** SMU is well known for its vibrant Greek life and party culture and less well known for its academic excellence and "life of the mind." What, if anything, should SMU do to change this perception?

This is your chance to speak out and get paid for it!

*Essays should be double-spaced, 12 point font and should include a title page with name, email address, telephone number, and ID number.*

Questions? Contact Todd Baty (tbaty@smu.edu)



## **Hilltopics 2007-2008 Editor Application**

Please return by 26 April to hilltopics@hotmail.com or any *Hilltopics* distributor.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Year: \_\_\_\_\_

Major(s) and Minor(s): \_\_\_\_\_

**Preference of Position:** (please rank 1-6, 1 being your first choice; note that actual positions filled may vary from those on application)

\_\_\_\_ **Editor-in-Chief** (conducts weekly meetings of editorial staff, directs overall management of publication)

\_\_\_\_ **Business Manager** (spokesperson for *Hilltopics* to the SMU community, facilitates the logistics of keeping *Hilltopics* in good standing with the University)

\_\_\_\_ **Copy Editor** (responsible for editing articles for length, grammar, and content)

\_\_\_\_ **Distribution Manager** (designs and implements the *Hilltopics* distributions strategy)

\_\_\_\_ **Graphics Editor** (designs each edition of *Hilltopics* and advertisements, as needed; responsible for generating and submitting PDF to printer each week; requires experience with Adobe Photoshop and Adobe InDesign)

\_\_\_\_ **Managing Editor** (directs the content of each issue and, in the case of controversy, has the final say as to what articles are or are not included)

*Please note that every editor, regardless of their particular position, will be responsible for distributing Hilltopics each week, and will also write articles as needed.*

### **Application Questions:**

Please briefly answer each of the following questions on a separate sheet and submit your responses with your application.

1. Why are you applying to be a *Hilltopics* editor?
2. What do you think are the biggest strengths and biggest weaknesses of *Hilltopics*?
3. What is a political, social, or cultural issue about which you care deeply? That is, what kinds of topics would you be most interested in writing about for *Hilltopics*? Why is this issue important to you?
4. Do you have any journalism/writing/design experience (lack of experience in no way disqualifies any applicant from consideration)?